



Building Healthy Communities

An initiative of the Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Section,
Michigan Department of Community Health

In partnership with Michigan State University Extension

Chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer account for 7 out of every 10 deaths in the United States and adversely affect the quality of life of millions of Americans. They also cost billions of dollars annually in medical expenditures and lost productivity.

In Michigan, rates of cardiovascular disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes are higher than national averages. The Building Healthy Communities program, developed in 2005, is designed to prevent chronic diseases and obesity by increasing the number of Michigan residents eating healthfully, being physically active, and not smoking.

Approach

The Building Healthy Communities program provides funding, training and technical assistance to local health departments through a competitive grant process. Local health departments build a coalition of diverse partners within communities of need. As a partner of the coalition, the local health department works collaboratively to assess the community's assets and gaps using Michigan tools available at www.mihealthtools.org, and develops a three-year action plan for change focusing on the increasing access to physical activity opportunities, healthy eating options and tobacco free environments. This planning phase is the first of a potential four year funding cycle.

The coalition works together to execute the action plan items by implementing and evaluating policy and environmental changes in their communities, promoting and educating residents about these changes, and leveraging local resources to sustain their efforts beyond the MDCH funding period. As communities take ownership of the process, local health departments continue to initiate the planning and change cycle in other communities throughout their jurisdiction.

Recognizing that behaviors are shaped by many influences, the Building Healthy Communities program utilizes a multi-level, socio-ecological approach to chronic disease prevention. Focus is placed on policy and environmental changes which are population-based and more likely to be sustainable than individual-level programs. Educational and promotional efforts are used to increase outreach to residents about these changes. Policy and environmental changes and community coalitions throughout Michigan are assisting in changing social norms around unhealthy behaviors by making healthy lifestyles easier for residents to pursue.



Building Healthy Communities—Results

SINCE ITS INCEPTION, THE BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES PROGRAM HAS ACHIEVED CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS

The program began with five local health departments in 2005 and now funds more than 23 health departments, more than quadrupling in size. From 2005 through 2008, these health departments have:

- Leveraged more than \$2.1 million to support their work;
- Engaged nearly 400 partners in healthy community activities at the local level; and
- Reached over 1.2 million Michigan residents through their efforts.

Tobacco Reduction Successes

6 new smoking bans have been established prohibiting smoking in businesses and county buildings

3 new smoking restrictions have been established limiting smoking in farmers' markets

7 new smoke-free policies established and posted on trail systems, in farmers' markets, and restaurants

Healthy Eating Successes

6 new farmer's markets have been created

8 new electronic benefits transfer (EBT) machines have been installed in farmers' markets

9 places, including gas stations and convenience stores, have begun selling or increased amount of fruits and vegetables for sale

11 new community gardens have been established

6,400 senior project FRESH coupons have been distributed to low income seniors to purchase fruits and vegetables

Nearly 33,000 healthy eating brochures, newsletters, posters, and other educational materials have been distributed

Physical Activity Success


19 trails covering 72 miles have been created or enhanced with new surfaces, benches, and lighting to increase safety and usage

10 parks totaling 129 acres have been enhanced with new playground and sporting equipment and/or enhanced to improve safety

11 new bicycle facilities, including bike racks and bike lane shoulders, have been created

42,500 walking maps have been distributed

30 community-wide fitness events have been held



The Building Healthy Communities Program currently funds 23 local health departments covering 40 counties, nearly half of all counties in Michigan!



More than 70 community members and dignitaries gathered for the opening of the Iron Ore Heritage Trail's Phase I between the cities of Ishpeming and Negaunee.

LOCAL SUCCESS STORY

Marquette County Health Department

The Marquette Active Living Task Force has recently completed 2.5 paved miles of a planned 48-mile Iron Ore Heritage Trail which will connect mining sites, museums, downtowns, transportation and mining stories from Republic to Chocoley Township. Evaluation results in 2008 documented more than 1,000 users in one week on the new stretch of trail. To support development and maintenance of the trail system, eight municipalities in Marquette County have recently formed the Iron Ore Heritage Trail Recreation Authority. The Recreation Authority is raising awareness of the importance of non-motorized trail development in the media and will be seeking a mileage increase in 2010 to support trail development and maintenance.

LOCAL SUCCESS STORY

Washtenaw County Public Health Department

Washtenaw County developed the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmers' Market in 2006 and added Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) capability in 2007. Between 2007 and 2008, EBT transactions more than quadrupled from \$462 to \$2181! Success is credited to marketing with a professionally designed logo and promotional materials including "How to Pay" instructions, EBT acceptance signage, market tote bags provided to patrons, and bus tail ads promoting EBT. Customers using EBT also earned \$1 in Market Bucks for every \$1 in EBT sales made at the market, up to \$5 per market day.



Bus ads promoting EBT use at Ypsilanti Farmers' Market were used as part of a successful marketing strategy to increase EBT sales.



Next Steps

Building Healthy Communities will continue to focus on building the capacity of local public health agencies and community coalitions to address chronic disease through sustainable policy and environmental change solutions. The Michigan Department of Community Health looks forward to continuing to expand efforts to additional communities across the state. In the coming years, the program will focus particular attention on:

1. Continuing to build the capacity of local public health to be leaders of healthy change in their communities by providing training and technical assistance.
2. Collaborating with other projects and programs at the national, state, and local levels to coordinate and strategically utilize scarce resources.
3. Exploring alternative funding options to expand the Building Healthy Communities Program to more Michigan communities.
4. Developing and implementing a comprehensive evaluation plan, including standardized evaluation measures for local interventions and centralized data reporting systems to track results.
5. Using social marketing strategies to increase use of environmental supports for healthy eating and physical activity created through the program.

For More Information, Contact:

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Visit:

Building Healthy Communities website - www.michigan.gov/healthycommunities
Michigan Health Tools Website - www.mihealthtools.org

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